

MEDIA RELEASE

Local Touch legends wanted: Bunnings Home Ground Heroes nominations open



2023 Bunnings Home Ground Hero, Ani Nock alongside her community

Nominations are open to celebrate the unsung heroes whose dedication and generosity help their Touch communities thrive, with selected recipients receiving \$5,000 to reinvest in grassroots sport

As one of New Zealand's most community-driven sports, Touch relies on the tireless commitment of volunteers and supporters who give far beyond the sidelines to help players train, compete and represent their communities.

Bunnings Home Ground Heroes is inviting Touch communities across Aotearoa to recognise the volunteers who make the game possible. From organisers and coaches to those working tirelessly behind the scenes, the initiative celebrates the unsung individuals whose passion, commitment and mahi keep Touch thriving at a grassroots level.

Over the past five years, 20 Home Ground Heroes from communities nationwide have been recognised for their outstanding contributions to Touch. Their stories reflect the heart of the Touch community and highlight the lasting impact one dedicated person can make.

Touch NZ Chief Executive, Joe Sprangers, said the partnership continues to make a meaningful difference. "Through the Bunnings Home Ground Heroes programme, Touch NZ has the opportunity to recognise and celebrate the people who are the backbone of our communities. In partnership with Bunnings, we've been able to acknowledge 20 remarkable individuals over the past five years, and we're excited to continue celebrating these everyday heroes," said Sprangers.

Bunnings NZ General Manager, Melissa Haines said, "Touch communities thrive because of everyday New Zealanders who give their time and energy to others. Home Ground Heroes lets us support that impact in a meaningful way, helping local volunteers do even more for their players and whānau. With many of our own team part of the Touch community, we're proud to open nominations for 2026 and continue backing the people who strengthen their communities."



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Past recipients have used the support to expand local initiatives, reduce barriers for families and invest in equipment that strengthens participation. Among the winners of the program, **Jenny Turner** shared the impact of the fund in her local Papamoa community.

“The funding has made a genuinely meaningful difference to how we deliver our junior module,” says Turner. “It’s enabled us to invest in essential infrastructure, from new referee shirts and refreshed equipment to a golf cart that helps our small volunteer team set up quickly and safely, along with a media wall that makes our championship finals feel truly special.

Turner added, “With just four volunteers running the programme, these upgrades have taken real pressure off our committee and helped us create an experience where kids feel valued, proud, and excited to be part of their local club.”

Meanwhile, **Ani Nock** has been a cornerstone of the Waikato Touch community for more than 25 years. Starting out as a player, she has gone on to represent New Zealand at the 2015 Touch World Cup. Ani plays a key role in coaching teams for the Women’s Touch NZ module. “The financial grant helped us invest in resources and equipment for the teams which has made a big difference and made life so much easier” she said. “We’ve also been able to invest heavily in our women’s module. We’re incredibly grateful to Bunnings for all their support.”

Godfather of Rotorua Touch and Bunnings Home Ground Hero Winner, **Steve Hudson** has been the backbone of the Rotorua Touch community for over a decade, driving growth and success through his unwavering commitment and passion for the sport. Steve advocates for the Bunnings programme and says “It allowed us to invest directly back into our facilities and equipment, ensuring a safer and more enjoyable environment for our players, whānau, and volunteers”

The 2026 Bunnings Home Ground Heroes initiative now invites Touch communities nationwide to nominate those who embody this same dedication. Nominators will simply need to outline how their nominee positively impacts the Touch community and how a \$5,000 grant would further strengthen their efforts.

Nominations close Saturday, 14 March 2026, with winners to be announced in mid-April.

For more information on the 2026 Bunnings Home Ground Heroes programme, visit: [Touch New Zealand - Bunnings Home Ground Heroes \(touchnz.co.nz\)](https://touchnz.co.nz)

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Notes to the editor:

Since 2018, Bunnings Warehouse has been the principal partner of Touch New Zealand and the naming-rights sponsor for all national tournaments. In 2026, the Bunnings Home Ground Heroes initiative returns to recognise the volunteers who go above and beyond to support the Touch community, with five recipients each receiving \$5,000 to reinvest locally. Making a positive difference in the Touch community is just a small way Bunnings can lend a hand to the communities in which we operate.

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